

LETTER OF COLONEL MACKENZIE RELATIVE TO MATTERS
AT FORT SILL.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING

A communication from Colonel Mackenzie relative to matters at Fort Sill.

MAY 15, 1876.—Referred to the Committee on Military Affairs.

JUNE 12, 1876.—Recommitted to the Committee on Military Affairs and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT, May 13, 1876.

The Secretary of War has the honor to transmit to the House of Representatives, for the Committee on Military Affairs, copy of an article from the New York Times relative to matters at Fort Sill, &c., forwarded by Colonel Mackenzie, with his reply to the editor in refutation, and a request for an investigation. Submitted to said committee at the suggestion of General Sherman.

ALPHONSO TAFT,
Secretary of War.

HEADQUARTERS FOURTH UNITED STATES CAVALRY,
Fort Sill, Ind. Ter., April 16, 1876.

SIR: I have the honor to inclose a slip taken from the New York Times of the 7th instant, and also a copy of a statement sent by me to the North for publication. This attack is undoubtedly made with the view of impressing on the minds of many excellent people in the North the horrors which would follow the transfer of the Indian Bureau to the War Department.

I very respectfully request that you will procure for me an investigation of this matter, and as it might be said just now that any one selected by the Secretary of War would be induced to prejudice the case in favor of the officers of the Army, as against the officials of the Board of Indian Commissioners, I very respectfully, but with entire deference to your judgment, suggest that some proper person be selected by the Secretary of State to make such examination.

Somebody deserves all the punishment that can be inflicted, and I know no one who would have greater contempt for the offenses with which myself and my officers stand charged, than Mr. Fish. In this matter, I do not wish to be understood as blaming Mr. Chandler, or any of his subordinates in the Interior Department. I trust and believe the

skirts of the agent, Mr. Hayworth, and of his employers, are clear of the crime which has been committed. As I understand it, the Board of Indian Commissioners is independent of the Secretary of the Interior.

I do not wish to annoy the President with any complaint of mine, but I cannot sit down and fold my hands under this. I therefore go to the honorable Secretary of War (through my military superiors) as the representative of the President, and claim for myself and my officers justice. My reason for mentioning Mr. Fish is just this: There is something wrong, and if the honorable Secretary of War names any one to look into the subject, it will be said, very possibly, that some one unfairly predisposed toward officers of the Army was mentioned, while, if the honorable Secretary of the Interior should have this matter investigated, he would perhaps be said to be favoring the officials of the board.

While I have every desire that nothing resulting from a complaint of mine be twisted or turned in any way so as to annoy the President, I believe that my command is, and has been, in a creditable condition, and I feel that we have been very much injured, and that these other officials should be dismissed.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

R. S. MACKENZIE,
Colonel Fourth Cavalry.

The Hon. SECRETARY OF WAR,
Washington, D. C., (through intermediate channels.)

[Inclosures.]

THE ARMY AND THE INDIANS.—A WRETCHED STATE OF THINGS AT FORT SILL.—WORKING INDIANS IN THE VICINITY NOT PROPERLY PROTECTED.

In view of the proposition to transfer the Indian Bureau to the Army, the following extracts from letters of an agent of the Board of Indian Commissioners sent to examine matters at Fort Sill, will be of general interest. The charge is made that the Army does not protect the industrious Indians, within a mile of Fort Sill, from Texas cattle-thieves:

KIOWA AND COMANCHE AGENCY,
Fort Sill, March 19, 1876.

Fort Sill is a sort of young Sodom, and the garrison is mostly made up of men who neither fear God nor regard man. The Sabbath is disregarded entirely by them. Horseracing on that day is a favorite pastime. On their grounds they have built a neat stone chapel, and it has not been used for any other purpose than a theater and a dance-hall. Drunkenness is prevalent. Evans takes in over his bar from \$200 to \$300 each day, and on pay-days a much larger sum. * * * I can only speak of their conduct as reckless and depraved. I am told that they sink much lower than the surface would indicate. Neither is there any distinction between the officers and the men. Perhaps the officers are the most at fault, as they set the example and fail to command the men to do right. The Indians have a great dread of being turned over to the military, and always ask about it when they see me. They say most emphatically that they are perfectly satisfied and do not wish a change.

FORT SILL, *March 14, 1876.*

The buildings are scattered over an area of about five miles.

In reference to the Kiowas and Comanches the writer states:

They are in earnest at their farm-work, and appear to take great interest in having homes, farms, and good crops. It seems to be a great pity that a people so well disposed, should suffer any drawbacks. They are subject to the constant raids of Texas bandits who steal their horses and mules and farming-stock within a mile of Fort Sill.

FORT SILL, March 16, 1876.

The military post Fort Sill is one mile from the agent's office. It is desirable to have the Indians and the military separated by a good distance. The influence of the common soldier is to destroy all morals and to corrupt all with whom he may come in contact. What Commissioner N. G. Taylor says in his report of 1868, with regard to the influence of the military on the Indians, is only too true of Fort Sill: "I know of no exception to the rule that the presence of military posts in the Indian country is speedily subversive of even the sternest ideas of Indian morals. The most loathsome, lingering, and fatal diseases which reach many generations in their ruinous effects, are spread broadcast, and the seeds of moral and physical death are planted among the miserable creatures." * * * It may be proper to state that this location was chosen by the military. Six years ago they contracted for and had two warehouses, for Indian goods, built, for which they paid \$17,000. The frames and siding are all cottonwood, the floors oak. On the day that they were finished \$1,000 each was all that they were worth.

HEADQUARTERS FOURTH UNITED STATES CAVALRY,
Fort Sill, Ind. T., April 16, 1876.

SIR: I inclose a letter which I wish you would publish. As you know nothing of me I refer, without any authority, to either General F. C. Barlow, Robert Potter, Henry E. Davies, Martin McMahon, or Col. William Jay, all of whom knew me during the war, and, I think, would say that my character as a soldier then renders the truth of the statement of an official of the Board of Indian Commissioners, published in your issue of the 7th instant, very doubtful. I have never before written a line for publication, nor should I now, were it not that while all this investigation is going on, and so many reputations which have always seemed fair, appear to be breaking, I fear that were I to remain silent some very respectable people who are my friends, or those of my juniors, might dread lest all this wickedness had really been going on. There has been a great wrong done, but it is that a libel by a bad man, sent to your paper from the worst of motives.

I give you the names of the gentlemen to whom I refer, for the reason that from their knowledge in the past they could form a very fair opinion as to the probability of the statement made, showing very bad discipline, while no one of them has, for very many years, had any connection whatever with the Army.

I have no objection to the publication of this letter, also, if you wish it.

I am, sir, very respectfully,

RANALD S. MACKENZIE,
Colonel Fourth Cavalry, Commanding.

The EDITOR NEW YORK TIMES, New York City.

HEADQUARTERS FORT SILL, IND. T.,
April 16, 1876.

SIR: The inclosed extracts from a communication, dated at the "Kiowa and Comanche Agency, Fort Sill, Ind. T.," and published in the New York Times of the 7th instant, do my command as well as myself great injustice.

The preface to the article shows that it comes with either the indorsement of the Board of Indian Commissioners, or the authority of some of its officials. I do not propose, just now when investigations are going on, to rest quiet under attack.

The object is obvious. Those extracts were not published particularly for the sake of injuring me or my command, but to attack, through us, the Army, and for an evil purpose.

Broadly, the article in all its spirit and inference is not true, with, in some instances, just enough fact curiously garbled to furnish a sandy foundation.

This command is not deprived or bad. I am not in favor of drunkenness or disorder, or opposed to the Christian religion. I have requested, therefore, a careful investigation of this matter, and that some one be punished, either myself or the official who wrote the communication, and those who gave his statements to the press. Some one ought to be punished, for, either I am a very poor officer, or these people are bad men.

It is fully time that officers in the service of the Government be dealt with for grave offenses, in some more substantial form than by abuse in the papers.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

RANALD S. MACKENZIE,
Colonel Fourth United States Cavalry.

To the EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES.

[First indorsement.]

HEADQUARTERS, FORT SILL, I. T., April 16, 1876.

Respectfully forwarded through the assistant adjutant-general, Department of the Missouri.

R. S. MACKENZIE,
Colonel Fourth Cavalry, Commanding Post.

[Second indorsement.]

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE MISSOURI,
Fort Leavenworth, Kans., April 24, 1876.

These papers are respectfully forwarded to the Adjutant-General of the Army (through office of the assistant adjutant-general, headquarters military division of the Missouri,) simply in deference to the wishes of Colonel Mackenzie, and not because I think there is any necessity for investigation, or that an officer of Colonel Mackenzie's well-earned and well-established reputation could in any way be injured by the libelous accusations of an anonymous newspaper correspondent.

JOHN POPE,
Brevet Major-General U. S. A., Commanding.

[Third indorsement.]

HEADQUARTERS MILITARY DIVISION OF MISSOURI,
Chicago, April 27, 1876.

Respectfully forwarded, out of consideration for Colonel Mackenzie, fully concurring with the indorsement of General Pope.

P. H. SHERIDAN,
Lieutenant-General, Commanding.

[Fourth indorsement.]

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY,
Washington, May 1, 1876.

Respectfully submitted to the Secretary of War, advising that this communication be sent to the Committee on Military Affairs instead of to the editor of the Times. I would not have our officers engage in a newspaper controversy, because those who prepare these slips will simply repeat their inventions *ad infinitum*.

General Mackenzie is too good an officer to be damaged in reputation by anonymous flings. He has kept the Kiowas, Comanches, &c., quiet now a whole year, a thing never accomplished heretofore.

W. T. SHERMAN,
General.

[Fifth indorsement.]

Seen by the Secretary of War May 5, 1876, who concurs in the views of the General.

H. T. CROSBY,
Chief Clerk.

Official copy.

E. D. TOWNSEND,
Adjutant-General.

ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE,
May 9, 1876.